



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

August 16, 2016
Quality Inn & Suites
Escanaba, Michigan

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT

Scott Norris, Chair
Al Bobrofsky
Ken Buchholtz
Cindy Burkhour
Jonathon Edgerly
Sarah Peurakoski
John Witzke
Duncan Wyeth

ABSENT

Rick Briggs
Vendela Collins
Ann Conklin
Daryl Domke
Carolyn Grawi
Michael Harris
Marc Russell
Amy Trotter
Kimberly Woolridge

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor
Stacy Welling-Haughey, AAC Upper Peninsula Sponsor
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Lynne Thoma, Fisheries
Deb Stolecki, Forest Resources
Christie Bayus, Grants
Steve Burton, Law Enforcement
Dave Haupt, Marketing & Outreach
Diana Engle, Michigan Historical Center, A-Team Co-Chair
Mike Evanoff, Parks & Recreation

INTERPRETERS

None Requested/Required.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kathryn Wyeth, Program Manager, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
Phil Schneeberger, Fisheries Division

REGULAR MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. with roll call. He thanked department staff for coordinating site tours and having staff available to greet them at various locations on their route to the Upper Peninsula. Those sites included the Straits State Harbor in Mackinaw City, the Thompson State Fish Hatchery in Manistique, and Palms Book State Park and the Kitch-iti-kipi ("The Big Spring") north of Manistique. He also thanked Ken Buchholtz, council member, and Stacy Welling-Haughey for getting them into the DNR Pocket Park and the Upper Peninsula State Fair.

Stacy Welling-Haughey, DNR Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator, and Sarah Peurakoski, council member and Executive Director of Superior Alliance for Independent Living, welcomed everyone to the Upper Peninsula.

Chair Norris asked if there were any additions or adjustments to the agenda. No changes were offered; however, Chair Norris acknowledged there was not a quorum due to last minute cancellations. Any action items on the agenda will have to be postponed until the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The February 16, 2016 Minutes were up for approval. Chair Norris postponed approval of the minutes because there was not a quorum.

The Chair reminded the council that the May 2016 meeting was cancelled due to the lack of a quorum, and this is the second meeting in a row that has lacked attendance by council members. The Chair stated he expects a quorum at the December meeting. He also stated that last minute cancellations are not acceptable and need to be approved by him.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Norris asked if there was anyone present from the general public that would like to address the council at this time or at the end of the meeting. No public comment was offered.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Executive Updates

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor, provided updates on department activities that have occurred over the past few months since the council last met in February 2016.

Flint Water Crisis

The DNR and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have been very involved in the Flint water crisis since the first of the year. The DEQ appointed a new Director, Heidi Grether, on August 1, 2016. Sharon was pleased to announce that Director Creagh has now returned to the DNR. He built good partnerships/relationships as the acting DEQ Director so the Governor has asked that he continue some of his work on the water crisis as part of his duties as the DNR Director. All other department staff that stepped up into acting roles while the Director was assisting the DEQ has also returned to their former roles/positions within the DNR.

Governor Snyder's "Focus on Ability"

Sharon reported that an e-mail was distributed to all DNR, and all state, employees requiring them to take this brief training titled "*Focus on Ability*." The video takes about 30 minutes and includes information on the benefits of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, respectful ways to interact and communicate with people who have a disability, recognizing the value of each employee's unique contributions, reasonable accommodations and other valuable resources in state government. Civil Service will be tracking participation to ensure all state employees take this course.

DNR Strategic Plan for Accessibility

The DNR's Strategic Plan for Accessibility has been completed. It was reviewed by the A-Team and incorporated comments from the council's version. The plan has also been reviewed and approved by the department's executive team and will be posted to the DNR's intranet after minor updates have been made. Sharon commented that the executive team did question how the department plans to track progress on the plan. The plan will be implemented within the divisions and their programs, including upgrades and improvements to facilities, to ensure accessibility to all. The A-Team will monitor the plan periodically to make sure it is still accurate and up-to-date, and recommend changes as new programs and new technology are developed.

DNR Accessibility Team (A-Team) Updates

ADA Accessibility Checklist

Mike Evanoff, A-Team member with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division, gave an overview of the accessibility checklist that the A-Team subcommittee has been working on for months. The checklist was originally created by Dan Lord, but it has been updated to incorporate the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The checklist will be used as an assessment tool to evaluate everything from restrooms, entrances and doorways, drinking fountains, picnic areas, parking areas, and will now include other areas such as ADA campsites, trails, beach access, and more. There will be approximately 59 different areas to review.

The checklist is being designed to make it easier for field staff, planners, supervisors and all employees to understand the requirements. The checklists will also provide visuals such as diagrams and drawings with the required measurements.

Mike then fielded questions and suggestions for improvements to the checklist, which included adding columns that would log and track completion of each requirement. The hope is to have the checklists completed by the end of October, and the A-Team will do a trial run at a facility to test them and make further suggestions for improvements.

Kal-Haven Mobile App

A trust fund application was received from the Michigan Historical Center to install interpretive signage along the Kal-Haven Trail, as well as landscape beautification. Christie Bayus and Diana Engle, A-Team members, gave an overview of the application and the scope of the project. The plan is to develop a downloadable web application that can be used along the trail in conjunction with the interpretive signage for people with disabilities. This is a unique application and the first of its kind. This mobile application could be the 21st Century version of interpretive signage as it will allow for screen reading and voice over systems. The plan is to also work with Michigan State University to develop the technology. With the advancements in technology (i.e. smart phones and android systems), this project, if successful, could be the mobile application that brings the state's natural, cultural and historical resources to the widest population possible.

The application is currently moving through the review and scoring process. Preliminary scores will be released in mid-September with the opportunity to provide documentation to increase the scoring. The hope today is to request endorsement from the council (i.e. Letters in Support). Projects will be presented to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board in October. Council members are also welcome to attend and speak on behalf of the application under public comment. Final recommendations will be made to the Board in December.

The site plan will be shared with the council, and an update will be provided at the December meeting.

Revised AAC and Accessibility Web Pages

David Haupt, A-Team member with the Marketing and Outreach Division, gave the council an overview of the changes that have been made to the department's accessibility web page, www.michigan.gov/dnraccessibility. Julie Ellsworth, also an A-Team member with the Marketing and Outreach Division, did an excellent job transforming the information on the site to include easily recognizable and universal symbols. The site also provides quick links to information pertaining to all outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, trails and scenic sites, campgrounds, cabins, lodges, yurts, and beaches. The site also has the permit, license and exemption applications and forms that need to be completed by persons with disabilities to obtain bow, ORV, standing vehicle, and laser sighting device permits. The site used to be extremely cluttered. It is now more simplified and easily accessible.

Council members commented on the need to make sure "accessible" descriptions are descriptive. If it says beach access, how do they provide access? If it says accessible mini-cabin, what makes it accessible? If it says an activity, site, feature or facility is accessible, then it needs to be descriptive. The council also suggested some kind of accessible feedback, comment card or survey that could be completed on-line. For example, if someone stayed in an "accessible mini-cabin, have a link next to that feature that allows them to complete and submit a comment card about their stay, suggestions for improvements, and whether or not their needs were accommodated.

Diana Engle responded that she will take these comments and suggestions back to the A-Team's marketing subcommittee for review and further discussion.

It was also suggested that each council member add the DNR's Accessible Recreation web page link to their web sites.

Yolanda Taylor presented changes and improvements that have been made to the council's web page, also with assistance from Julie Ellsworth. This site was also cluttered with too much information and was simplified for easier reading. The link to the council's web page is http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-65134_65137---,00.html.

Council members were asked to review both web sites and submit their comments or suggestions regarding the council's web page to Yolanda Taylor at taylor1@michigan.gov, or Diana Engle at engled@michigan.gov for comments regarding the DNR's accessibility web page.

DNR FISHERIES DIVISION PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Phil Schneeberger, Lake Superior Basin Coordinator, gave the council an overview of new fisheries programs and initiatives that provide more accessible fishing opportunities at varying locations around the state. A couple of new programs include:

Trout Trails is a downloadable program that contains information on where to catch trout throughout Michigan with detailed descriptions, photos, trout species and where they can be located, trout regulations at that location, stocked or natural reproduction, and other amenities in the local area (i.e. lodging, bait stores).

Family Friendly Fishing Waters is an on-line program that identifies family friendly fishing waters in each county throughout the State of Michigan. Family friendly fishing waters are those that are easily accessible, have a high likelihood of catching fish, have various amenities, and are all around family-friendly. Each county has a link to family friendly fishing waters that allows users to download a lake map and information regarding the lake, the type of fish species available, what type of bait to use, amenities, and directions.

Phil reported there are six fish hatcheries in the state. The fish hatcheries are the focal points for outreach and education. They provide learning opportunities for adults, school groups, and families through interpretive signs, interpretive computers, self-guided tours or scheduled tours during normal work hours.

Phil further highlighted some of the improvements that have been made at fish hatcheries and fishing piers around the state to make them barrier free and more accessible. He concluded with the fact that \$12.2 million has been allocated in fiscal year 2017 to improve fishing experiences by stocking more and larger fish and making critical infrastructure improvements.

The council thanked Phil for his presentation and he fielded a few questions about lamprey suppression and Asian carp.

Council member Duncan Wyeth commented that this council has had the privilege of visiting the Marquette Fish Hatchery a few years ago, the Manistee Weir last August, and the Thompson Fish Hatchery on this trip. He thanked the Fisheries Division for the improvements that have been made at all facilities.

AAC COMMITTEE

Election of Vice-Chair

Chair Norris postponed this discussion to the next meeting.

AAC Subcommittee Participation

Chair Norris reminded council members that five subcommittees were established, but only a few of them have adequate representation. He encouraged members to join a subcommittee that aligns with their profession or interest, but all members should be assigned to at least one subcommittee.

AAC Membership/Terms

Chair Norris postponed this discussion to the next meeting.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Subcommittee Reports

The AAC's Policy and Legislation Subcommittee has been working on revising the council's bylaws. They just had a conference call this morning and the plan is to have the revised bylaws

completed and presented for adoption at the December 13 meeting, with an effective date of January 1, 2017.

WHEELIN' SPORTSMEN PROGRAM

Ken Buchholtz is a council member, as well as a dedicated member of the Wheelin' Sportsmen program. He gave the council an overview of the Wheelin' Sportsmen program.

The Wheelin' Sportsmen program provides all people with disabilities and veterans with opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. With more than 50 million people with disabilities in the United States, this program fills a significant void. The National Wild Turkey Federation chapters host Wheelin' Sportsmen events across North America that help participants gain a sense of independence by learning to stay active in the outdoors on their own in-between hosted Wheelin' Sportsmen events. Event participants enjoy activities like hunting, fishing and shooting sports. In addition to local chapter events, Wheelin' Sportsmen hosts an assortment of other national events.

Ken is deeply dedicated to the programs offered in the Upper Peninsula and, during his presentation, showed numerous photos of successful and extremely happy hunters. In addition to working with people with disabilities and veterans, they also offer events for the elderly and those in assisted living facilities to get them outdoors.

Stacy Welling-Haughey commented that Ken has made such a positive impact on these people's lives, not only in the Upper Peninsula but in other areas around the state. There are not enough words of thanks for his heartfelt dedication to these people.

Ken also works with the Demmer Shooting Sports, Education and Training Center in Lansing to coordinate events for disabled adults and children.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Chair Norris mentioned that he and his wife were at Belle Isle last weekend and ran into a couple that live two blocks away from the MacArthur Bridge that leads to the island. This couple made several comments about how nice the park/island is since the state took over, and how they feel more secure at the park. This council met at and toured Belle Isle in October 2015 so he thought this was a nice update for the council to hear, especially from local residents.

Duncan Wyeth thanked the state employees that continue to put their time, effort and tremendous support into this council and the department's accessibility team and efforts.

Duncan also introduced his wife, Kathryn Wyeth, who is the Program Manager for the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition. She mentioned there is an Assistive Technology (AT) Loan Fund. These loans are available for a wide range of AT, including AT used in outdoor recreation. These loans are available to residents of Michigan, people with disabilities, to borrow up to \$30,000 to purchase assistive technology, training or services related to AT. These loans can also be used for smaller amounts of money to establish credit. Interested parties can apply on-line through United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan or council member, Sara Peurakoski, with the Superior Alliance for Independent Living.

John Witzke mentioned that the council previously discussed the need to get their mission, as well as the department's mission and/or programs related to accessibility out to the general public and requested an update. Cindy Burkhour commented that she worked on a committee with Pure Michigan when they first got started but that person has since left. Efforts to reach out

to them have been met with less than a positive response. She further commented that if there is any way the department or Pure Michigan can get more accessible recreation opportunities, videos, scenes, or photos like the ones Ken presented today, on the radar for future consideration, hopefully someone will open their eyes and ears to the idea.

Sharon Schafer responded that she will talk to the Chief of the Marketing and Outreach Division and report back at a future meeting.

Duncan Wyeth, Sara Peurakoski, and Ken Buchholtz are all council members that reside in the Upper Peninsula. They are all hoping to work together and with Stacy Welling-Haughey to get a more formative presence and interest in the council. The hope is to also coordinate travel to council meetings downstate.

ADJOURN

Chair Norris reminded the council that the next meeting is scheduled for December 13 and will be held at the new DNR Lansing Customer Service Center. He also requested that any absences from this meeting be cleared through him as the Chair.

Chair Norris requested a motion to adjourn.

Duncan Wyeth motioned to adjourn; Cindy Burkhour seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.